

of *Vivian Grey*. The novel owed its success no doubt in the first instance to Colburn's ingenious puffing, but it had sufficient merit of its own to reward the attention that had been artificially drawn to it. By the beginning of July a second edition had been called for, and a third, with certain modifications, was issued in the following year. Within three years of its first appearance Disraeli had come to reckon *Vivian Grey* among his 'juvenile indiscretions,'<sup>1</sup> and for a quarter of a century, as he wrote in 1853, he refused to reprint it; but in that year, as the book had 'baffled even the efforts of its creator to suppress it,' he submitted it to a severe expurgation and gave it a place in a collected edition of his works. He was careful, however, in a preface, to disarm the critics by anticipating their harshest censure.

Books written by boys, "which pretend to give a picture of manners and to deal in knowledge of human nature, must necessarily be founded on affectation. They can be, at the best, but the results of imagination, acting upon knowledge not acquired by experience. Of such circumstances exaggeration is a necessary consequence, and false taste accompanies exaggeration. . . . Such productions should be exempt from criticism, and should be looked upon as a kind of literary lusus.

In the face of this frank avowal, it would be absurd to embark on any pedantic inquiry into the worth of the book as a permanent contribution to literature. The question that is really interesting is its biographical value — what light, if any, does it throw on the developing mind and character of the author? The scheme of the novel is very simple. A couple of lines from the *Merry Wives of Windsor* —

'Why, then the world's mine  
oyster, Which I with sword  
will open,'

appear as a motto on the title page. Vivian Grey, the clever and precocious son of a distinguished man of letters, after a stormy career at school and a period of

i *Life of J. Bulwer Lytton*, II., p. 316.